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Contacts:

Meagan Racey, 413-253-8558, Meagan\_Racey@fws.gov

Wendy Walsh, 609-646-9310, Wendy\_Walsh@fws.gov

Tom MacKenzie, 404-679-7291, Tom\_MacKenzie@fws.gov

Lesli Gray, 972-569-8588, Lesli\_Gray@fws.gov

## **Service reopens comment period on proposal to protect red knot under Endangered Species Act**

*Shorebird flies up to 18,600 miles a year on 20-inch wingspan*

The *rufa* red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), a robin-sized shorebird that visits the U.S. on its annual journey between the tips of the Americas, is in trouble.

The knot's population has declined by about 75 percent in some areas since the 1980s. Changing climate conditions are already affecting the bird's food supply, the timing of its migration and its breeding habitat in the Arctic. The shorebird also is losing habitat along its range due to sea level rise, shoreline projects and development.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reopened the comment period on its proposal to list the knot as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and will hold two public hearings. The Service proposed to list the knot on September 30, 2013, following an analysis of the best available data in more than 1,400 scientific documents. The public can provide comments on the proposed rule for 45 days through May 19, 2014. Comments provided during the first comment period need not be resubmitted, as those are already part of the administrative record.

During the initial comment period, the Service received more than 560 individual comments and 19,000 form letters. Additionally, requests were made to hold public hearings specifically in North Carolina and Texas. A public hearing is offered upon request with every federal rulemaking to ensure maximum public participation and awareness of a proposed action. Public hearings, preceded by information sessions and opportunities to ask questions to Service biologists, will be held May 6, 2014, in Morehead City, N.C., and in Corpus Christi, Texas. The Texas information session and public hearing will be held at the Harte Research Institute, Conference Room 127, 6300 Ocean Drive, Corpus Christi, TX 78412. The information session is scheduled from 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. and the public hearing is scheduled from 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. More information is available at [www.fws.gov/southwest](http://www.fws.gov/southwest).

The Service expects to take final action on the listing rule by the end of September 2014. As required by the ESA, the Service is also reviewing the U.S. range of the knot to identify areas that are essential for its conservation, called critical habitat. Critical habitat focuses the coordination of federal agencies, which are directed by the ESA to aid in the conservation of listed species. Examples of factors for determining species' critical habitat include where it occurs and how often, and the most important defined areas that support its biological needs such as feeding or resting. For the knot, these elements may include sand dunes and wide, open beaches for roosting and habitat supporting prey like small clams. The Service expects to publish a separate rule proposing critical habitat in 2014.

Details on the kinds of information the Service is seeking are available in the comment period reopening notice published in the *Federal Register* on April 4, 2014. Comments and information can be provided at the hearings or submitted through the following methods:

- Federal Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting information on docket number FWS-R5-ES-2013-0097.
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R5-ES-2013-0097; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, Virginia 22203.

The knot is one of the longest-distance migrants in the animal kingdom. While migrating between wintering grounds as far as south as Tierra del Fuego and breeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic, the shorebird can be found in flocks of a few individuals to several thousand along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

The largest concentration of knots is found in May in Delaware Bay, where studies show knots nearly double their weight to prepare for the final leg of their long migration to the Arctic. One bird, called B95 from the numbered flag scientists have attached to his leg, has been nicknamed the Moonbird because he has flown the equivalent of a trip to the moon and at least halfway back in his 20 or more years of migrations.

International, state, and local governments, the conservation community, beachgoers and land managers are helping ensure knots have safe areas to winter, rest and feed during their long migrations. These partners help knots in a variety of ways, including managing disturbance in key habitats, improving management of hunting outside the U.S. and collecting data to better understand the knot.

Learn more about the red knot at: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/redknot/>.